

VZCZCXRO4500  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHGH RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHVC  
DE RUEHGP #3136 2720856  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 290856Z SEP 06  
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1402  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 003136

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/29/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SN](#)  
SUBJECT: BANNED IN SINGAPORE - GOS HITS FAR EASTERN  
ECONOMIC REVIEW

REF: SINGAPORE 1912

Classified By: EP Counselor Ike Reed. Reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (U) On September 28, the GOS announced it had banned the Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) in Singapore. The Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) said FEER had failed to meet the requirements of the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act to appoint a local legal representative and to submit a SD 200,000 (USD 126,500) security deposit. According to a MICA press release, it is now an offense "for any person to sell or distribute, or import or possess for sale or distribution, the FEER in Singapore." Access to the FEER website has not been blocked, however.

Chee, Chee, Chee  
-----

¶2. (U) The GOS ban on FEER comes at the same time that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew are suing FEER for defamation over an article in its July/August edition on opposition politician Chee Soon Juan entitled "Singapore's 'Martyr,' Chee Soon Juan." Legal action was first initiated on July 13 when the two leaders demanded an apology and damages from FEER for questioning whether the GOS deserves its reputation for "squeaky-clean government." The lawsuit was filed in court on August 22. PM Lee and MM Lee have a separate defamation suit pending against Chee Soon Juan stemming from his party's pre-election newsletter (Reftel).

Legalists in Action  
-----

¶3. (C) MICA Press Secretary Krishnasamy Bhavani denied there was any link between the ban on FEER and the defamation suit. She told us on September 29 that FEER's operating license simply had come up for renewal and it had not complied with the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act. Other publications -- including the Financial Times -- had. She added that nobody had ever been prosecuted before for violating the Act. Furthermore, FEER's website would not be affected since "we cannot do anything about on-line because the Act does not cover on-line media."

¶4. (C) Comment: The GOS action against FEER may well be related to its coverage of Chee Soon Juan. Chee gets under the skin of the senior Singapore leadership regularly. Chee has been a constant critic of the GOS for more than a decade and is undeterred by his many setbacks -- the loss of his job, bankruptcy, and brief stints in jail. GOS leaders have used a wide array of legal tools to deal harshly with anyone who portrays Chee in a positive or sympathetic light. End Comment.  
HERBOLD